



James: Faith that Works

Follow the Cove on Facebook for weekly updates, podcasts or post a question. Search for CRB Cove and “like” it to share with your friends!

“Wise, Uplifting Responses to Life’s Vital Moments”

James 5:13-16

December 1, 2019

Dr. James D. Smith III

Theme: As Dr. Strauss said in his “Faith that Works” intro to the book of James, perseverance by faith produces spiritual maturity. How do we do this? The key commitment is keeping our eyes on God. The reverent awe of the Lord (“*yare Yahweh*”) is the beginning of **wisdom**: knowing what best to do with what we have! Today’s passage motivates faithful responses to three intense life moments.

Context:

The Lord Jesus’ stories utilized everyday life situations, drawing listeners into personal connection and – wrestling with “the point” – decisions. The apostle James knew his brother’s practical approach well. Writers like Martin Luther faulted his “epistle of straw” for not emphasizing salvation themes like “grace.” But for the messianic believers in a hostile culture, a *praxis* “faith that works” was vital. This remains so in our world today!

Outline:

KAKO-PATHEO: afflicted (KJV), suffering (NAS), in trouble (NIV)? PRAY! (v 13)

“If anyone among you is suffering evil – let them pray.” Experiencing what our mind, instincts and worldview say is “bad news,” we rightly cry out. Often what we seek is deliverance or endurance: relief (freed from the afflicting condition), release (freed from our afflicting response), and/or reframe (freed to discover a fact-fitting, life-giving meaning). In this we discover the **raw materials for prayer**, turning our monologue into a divine dialogue (Henri Nouwen). Martin Luther King’s favorite song was a prayer:

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand.” Living the lament of Psalm 22 may reveal the healing pathway to Psalm 23. See also John 16:33.

***EUTHYMEO* – merry (KJV), cheerful (NAS), happy (NIV)? SING OUT! (v 13)**

“Feeling good? Sing it out!” Whatever the details - spontaneous or culmination - a sense of well-being calls for **uplifted** praise expression. This “joyful noise” (Ps. 98, 100) ultimately communicates to God as well, a form of prayer. Vital inward Spirit-life may be evidenced by outward psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:18-21; Col. 3:14-17). As in David’s Psalms, words of celebration *to* God and *about* God each play their role. Often these expressions are enriched and find sustaining quality in community. “Praise God” and “thank you” belong together. “Blessed be the name of the Lord” is the Church’s Spirit-led prayer and praise song across generations.

***ASTHENEIO* – sick (KJV, NAS, NIV), ill, feeble, weakened? CALL OUT! (v 14-15)**

“Tapped? Call out for Church elders / soul friends.” Those facing debilitation should not go it alone. Rather, mature believers – elders in gift/function/office – can gather to faithfully pray, at times blessing by anointing (medicinal, sacramental) in the Lord’s name. This priestly role (Latin *pontifex* = bridge-builder) reaffirms connections with heaven and earth. Whether **healing** comes as lasting cure or sustained wholeness, the Lord’s faithful is “saved,” “raised up.” Though sin may not cause the infirmity (Jn 9:1-3), whole-person health deserves special attention...

***EXOMOLOGEO* – need to give to the Lord both faith and faults? CONFESS! (v16)**

The three disciplines above express a confession of faith (Phil 2:11, Rom 14:11). The same Greek word – “shared understanding expressed” – is what we’re called to do with our sins, faults, missed spiritual targets. These underlying realities are always offered to God (I Jn 1:9), may be declared in public to a community impacted (Ps. 51), or admitted as sin to those wounded – at times inviting soul-friends to pray for our honesty, courage and restoration. The core of our “forgiveness” is *for-giveo*: confronting messes we either send away people or send away the offense.

Takeaway: Many of us find sorrows, joys, fatigue, and spiritual awakenings as ongoing realities. How do James’ teachings guide our responses? In one holiday sentence: **veterans** of life’s experiences, we **give thanks** for God’s faithful provision and lift up our eyes to celebrate Jesus’ **advent**: the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth (John 1). Joy to the World!

Next Cove:

Date: December 8, 2019

Title: Boasting About Tomorrow (4:13-17)